

3rd Friday A Ordinary Time - St. John Bosco

Introduction

Currently, I am a member of a search committee charged with finding a new president for Mt. St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, MD. In that capacity, I expected to work hard but sadly, did not expect to be inspired.

I was wrong. One of the candidates was asked how best to advance the Catholic identity of the nation's second-oldest Catholic University. The candidate answered: "I love the Catholic faith. For 30 years I've gone to Mass each day. Every day I pray the Rosary. I want to deepen my friendship with Jesus and I want to grow in holiness. Without that reliance on the Lord and that commitment on my part, I'd never do anything worthwhile to advance this University's Catholic identity.

Of its own accord

I tell this story because it leads us to the heart of the parable about the sower and the seed. Jesus makes the point that while the former sows the seed, it springs up of its own accord as St. Paul would say, "It is God who gives the growth."

In his letter on the arrival of the new millennium Blessed John Paul II warns against over-reliance on our efforts, plans and strategies. Evangelization - sowing the seed of God's Word - without prayer and deep trust is fruitless. Anything good we want to do for the Order without prayer and reliance on the Lord will miss the mark.

St. John Bosco This brings us to St. John Bosco, a 19th century apostle to troubled and underprivileged youth. What makes St. John Bosco so attractive to us and to the young people of his day was the depth of his prayer and the authenticity of his faith. The seed of God's Word grew in the fertile soil of his docile soul and produced a rich harvest of virtue, strength, gentleness and joy.

The disadvantaged youth of his day picked up on this - they saw he was "the real deal". So too those who joined John Bosco in his priestly service to the young.

Fast forward to the presidential search at the Mount. When the students heard this

candidate profess the faith personally and authentically they were immediately attracted. You could tell not only by the thundering applause but also by how many who lingered afterwards. Had you been there you'd know for whom I'm going to vote!

Getting out of the way

When we substitute our plans for God's, we sin. We saw an extreme example of that in the first reading wherein David hatches a deadly plan to destroy Uriah whose wife he had taken to himself.

Mother Theresa would say, "Don't get in God's way" and "Give God permission". By prayer, a continual spirit of repentance, by strengthening our faith, let us grow in our love and trust of Jesus and our reliance on his wisdom and love.

Then all we do for the Order - in spite of all the headwinds that buffet us, will bear great fruit - in the lives of countless Knights and their families in parish communities, and indeed at every level of the Church's life.

May God bless us and keep us always in His love.